

Message Text

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ACTION PM-05

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O P 120945Z AUG 78 ZFF-4 ZZK
FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
TO COMIDEASTFOR NIACT IMMEDIATE
USS VREELAND NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO CINCUSNAVEUR PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI PRIORITY
SECSTATE WASHDC 6755

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOGADISCIO 1840

ROME/NAIROBI PLS PASS AMBASSADOR LOUGHRAN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OCLR, SO, US
SUBJ: USS VREELAND PORT VISIT

REFS: A) COMIDEASTFOR 112050Z AUG 78 (NOTAL)
B) USS VREELAND 101315Z AUG 78 (NOTAL)

1. EMBASSY OFFICER CONTACTED MOGADISCIO PORT INSTRUCTOR PILOT (AN ITALIAN NATIONAL) 11 AUGUST TO OBTAIN ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON MOGADISCIO PORT. THE NEW PORT OPENED IN OCTOBER 1977, AND DETAILS OF THE PORT ARE PUBLISHED IN THE ENGLISH HYDROGRAPHIC SERIES. PILOT DID NOT KNOW WHETHER PORT HAD YET BEEN PUBLISHED IN ANY AMERICAN PUBS. (WE INFER FROM REF A THAT COMIDEASTFOR MAY NOT HAVE THIS INFO AVAILABLE. IF NOT, WE SUGGEST TRYING TO OBTAIN WHILE IN DJIBOUTI).

UNFORTUNATELY, THIS PILOT WILL BE GOING ON LEAVE 15 AUGUST AND WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE DURING VREEJHAND VISIT.

2. IN VIEW OF ABOVE, PILOT WILL ANNOTATE ONE OF HIS
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CHARTS WITH INFO ON PREVAILING CURRENTS, SUGGESTED MANEUVERS TO ENTER, ETC, AND GIVE TO EMBASSY. AS THERE IS INSUFFICIENT TIME TO GET THIS CHART TO DJIBOUTI TO PROVIDE TO VREELAND, WE WILL ATTEMPT TO SEND IT OUT VIA THE PILOT BOAT ON ARRIVAL MOGADISCIO.

3. PILOTS. THERE IS ONE CERTIFICATED SOMALI PILOT AND TEN STUDENT PILOTS. ACCORDING TO THE ITALIAN, HOWEVER, THE SOMALI

PILOT IS EVALUATED AS ONLY PARTIALLY COMPETENT, AND LACKS EXPERIENCE AS A DEEP-SEA MASTER. PILOT ADVISES THAT COMMANDING OFFICER OF VREELAND EXERCISE CLOSE SUPERVISION AND CONTROL DURING PERIODS WHEN SOMALI PILOT IS ABOARD. NORMAL PROCEDURE IS FOR PILOT TO BOARD SHIP IN ANCHORAGE. SOMALI PILOT'S NAME IS ABUCAR SHEIKH MAYE.

4. MOGADISCIO PILOT GUARDS VHF MARINE CHANNEL 16, SUPPOSEDLY ON 24 HOUR BASIS (ALTHOUGH STUDENT PILOTS ON DUTY HAVE A TENDENCY TO SHUT OFF THE RADIO), AND USES CHANNELS 12 AND 14 FOR SHIP HANDLING FREQUENCIES.

5. CONDITIONS IN THE ROADS. DURING THE SOUTHWEST MONSOON, THERE ARE NO PERIODS OF CALM DURING WHICH ENTRY INTO PORT IS OPTIMUM. THERE IS A STRONG CURRENT OF 6-7 KNOTS DIRECTION OF WHICH DEPENDS ON TIDE. WIND IS FREQUENTLY FORCE 6 TO FORCE 7 FROM THE SOUTH, WITH WAVES UP TO 12 FEET HIGH. (AS EXAMPLE, PILOT REQUIRED OVER HALF AN HOUR TO BOARD MERCHANT SHIP VIA PILOT'S LADDER ON 11 AUGUST). ACCORDING TO PILOT, CONDITIONS ARE SUCH THAT TRANSFER OF PERSONNEL TO SMALL BOATS IN ROADS CONSIDERED VERY RISKY AND UNADVISABLE.

6. LAUNCHES. THERE ARE ONE OR TWO LAUNCHES WHICH TRANSPORT SOMALI UNLOADING GANGS TO SHIPS IN THE ANCHORAGE AND TOW BARGES. THEY WOULD NOT BE AVAILABLE FOR REGULARLY SCHEDULED TRANSFER OF PERSONNEL, AND IN ANY CASE ARE CONSIDERED DANGEROUS. (WE CAN CONFIRM

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THIS VIEW, AS CONSULAR OFFICER ONCE BOARDED MERCHANT VESSEL DURING "CALM" SEASON AND CONSIDERED THE ENTIRE EXERCISE AS RISKY.)

7. PORT. THE NEW PORT HAS APPROXIMATELY 500 METERS OF BERTHING SPACE ALONG THE MAIN QUAI, THE FIRST 200 METERS OF WHICH ARE NOT RECOMMENDED DUE TO CONSTRUCTION. THERE IS A SMALLER QUAI USED BY SHALLOW DRAFT BANANA BOATS, WHICH WOULD NOT BE ADVISABLE. EMBASSY WILL ATTEMPT TO INSURE ADEQUATE BERTHING SPACE ALONG LAST 300 METERS OF MAIN QUAI.

8. TUGS: THERE ARE TWO 1100 HP TWIN-SCREW TUGS AVAILABLE. TUGBOAT CAPTAINS ARE CONSIDERED ONLY marginally competent and REQUIRE CLOSE SUPERVISION AND CONTROL DURING MANEUVERS.

9. DEPTH ALONGSIDE. THE MINIMUM LOW TIDE DEPTH ALONGSIDE THE BERTHS AND IN THE CHANNEL IS 10 METERS. TIDES VARY 2.70 METERS FROM MAXIMUM HIGH TO LOW TIDE. IN PILOT'S OPINION, IT WILL NOT BE NECESSARY TO WAIT FOR HIGH TIDE FOR VREELAND TO MOOR NEW PORT.

10. DURING THE SOUTHWEST MONSOON, SHIPS ENTER THE PORT, EXECUTE A LEFT TURN AND COME ALONGSIDE BOW FIRST, USING SHIP'S POWER. TUGS NORMALLY TAKE UP POSITIONS ON STARBOARD SIDE OF SHIP FORE AND AFT AND PUSH TO SEAWARD TO COUNTER THE EFFECTS OF WIND AND

CURRENT, WHICH TEND TO PUSH SHIP AWAY FROM THE QUAH AND TOWARDS THE ROCKY SHORE. ACCORDING TO THE PILOT, THE TUGS ARE LESS NERVOUS ATTEMPTING THIS MANEUVER THAN ATTEMPTING TO TOW.

11. FUEL: THERE ARE NO BARGES CAPABLE TO CARRYING OUT FUEL TO THE ANCHORAGE. THERE ARE FUEL TRUCKS AVAILABLE. PILOT ESTIMATES THAT 100,000 GALLONS OF FUEL WOULD REQUIRE 10 TRUCKLOADS. HE BELIEVES THAT AT USUAL PACE OF SOMALI WORKERS, ONE OR TWO DAYS WOULD BE REQUIRED

IN ORDER TO FUEL. EMBASSY CHECKING ON FUEL AVAILABILITY ON URGENT BASIS AND WILL ADVISE. WE HAVE THE SPECS IN COMIDEASTFOR 051027Z AUG 78. HOWEVER, WE REQUEST VREELAND ADVISE ASAP WHAT ACCEPTABLE LIMITS OF VARIATION IN EACH PARAMETER WOULD BE IN EVENT LOCAL FUEL DOES NOT MEET EXACT SPECS DESIRED.

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12. BASED ON ALL THE ABOVE, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT VREELAND CANNOT ACCOMPLISH ITS MISSION BY ANCHORING IN ROADS. IN ADDITION, SOMALIS OBVIOUSLY EXPECT VREELAND TO DOCK IN NEW PORT. THEREFORE, WE WILL PROCEED WITH PLANNING ON BASIS OF VREELAND'S ENTERING NEW PORT FACILITY.

13. OBVIOUSLY, THE EMBASSY HAS NO EXPERTISE IN TECHNICAL PROBLEMS OF SHIP HANDLING AND ENTRY INTO MOGADISCIO PORT. WE NEVERTHELESS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PUT SPECIFIC QUESTIONS TO THE PILOT PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE ON THE EARLY MORNING OF 16 AUGUST. ACCORDINGLY, PLEASE ADVISE ANY SPECIFIC FOLLOWUP QUESTIONS WE CAN PUT TO PILOT ON ANY ASPECT OF PORT OR NORMAL LOCAL PROCEDURES RE SHIP-HANDLING OR ENTRY INTO PORT.

14. HAZARDS TO NAVIGATION: PILOT ADVISES THAT A MERCHANT SHIP BURNED IN ANCHORAGE IN JULY. HULK OF THIS SHIP IS UNMANNED AND DISPLAYS NO LIGHTS. IT HAS ALSO SHIFTED POSITION DUE TO WINDS AND CURRENTS BY OVER ONE HALF MILE IN UNDER ONE MONTH. PILOT SUGGESTS APPROACHING MOGADISCIO ANCHORAGE AT DAYBREAK IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN VISUAL CONTACT WITH HULK OF SHIP WHILE WAITING FOR PILOT BOAT IN ANCHORAGE AREA.

15. EMBASSY CHECKING ON FUTW AVAILABILITY ON URGENT BASIS. WILL ADVISE ASAP.

16. LOGREQS: SEPARATE TELEGRAM FOLLOWS ON OTHER ASPECTS OF LOGREQS AND VHF COMMS.

17. PLEASE ADVISE RE PARA 13 ABOVE VIA IMMEDIATE NIACT (IE ZZK) PROCEDURES.

18. REQUEST ACTION ADDRES ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT THIS MESSAGE.
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Message Attributes

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